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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 001759

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TAGS: PREL PGOV IZ

SUBJECT: IRAQIYYA MP PACHACHI DISCUSSES WITHDRAWAL FROM GOI

REF: A. BAGHDAD 1622

1B. BAGHDAD 848

1C. BAGHDAD 941

1D. BAGHDAD 1666

Classified By: Ambassador Ryan C. Crocker for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) Summary and comment: Former Iraqi Governing Council (IGC) President and cross-sectarian secular Iraqiyya party member Adnan Pachachi met with Ambassador May 22 to discuss Iraqiyya's plans to form a cross-sectarian opposition bloc. Ambassador welcomed Pachachi back to Iraq after long and frequent absences, and pressed him to remain in Baghdad and use his influence as a member of the Council of Representatives (CoR) with a national reputation to help the GOI achieve key reconciliation benchmarks. Pachachi seems to have returned for the purpose of gauging USG views on Iraqiyya head and former PM Ayad Allawi's effort to form an opposition bloc as an alternative to the Maliki government. Having not received our support or encouragement, Allawi's return may not be imminent, despite President Talabani's claim to have convinced him to return to Baghdad to participate in the GOI (ref A). End summary and comment.

No Confidence in Maliki Government

12. (C) Former ICG President and current MP Adnan Pachachi met with Ambassador May 23 accompanied by fellow Iraqiyya MP Maysoon al-Damluji. Ambassador welcomed Pachachi back to Baghdad, saying his prolonged absences from the Iraqi political scene created a gap. (Comment and background: Since losing the 2005 election, Allawi and Pachachi have preferred to spend their time outside of Iraq courting Arab capitals in a bid to form an opposition bloc and replace the Maliki government. During Allawi and Pachachi's last month-long visit to Baghdad in February-March, neither remained in Iraq to work within the GOI to achieve key reconciliation goals, nor did they prove willing to use their influence within the CoR toward that end. Allawi announced then his attempt to form a cross-sectarian CoR bloc with a "moderate, nationalist agenda," negotiating with the Sunni Tawafuq bloc, Shia Fadila party and others. This effort failed, according to many, due to Allawi's insistence that he be named the head of any new bloc. He has continued in this effort from outside of Iraq. End comment and background.)

13. (C) Pachachi reviewed Iraqiyya's complaints against the GOI -- that it is not a government of national unity but of sectarian interest, and that Iraqiyya, despite its five ministries, was marginalized by The Shia UIA bloc from the beginning and refused positions of influence or participation in GOI decision making. He explained that Maliki never responded to Allawi's March 2 letter to the PM threatening to withdraw from the government unless certain conditions were met including, among other demands, cleansing the Iraqi

security forces of militia infiltration, suspending the High National Council for Debaathification pending Debaathification reform, and ending the practice of sectarian quotas for government positions (ref B).

Iraqiyya Leadership Prefers Opposition Role

¶ 14. (C) Pachachi asked Ambassador for the USG position on Iraqiyya's on-going efforts to form a cross-sectarian, moderate bloc (ref C), reporting that he had heard in Cairo and Abu Dhabi that the U.S. was opposed to Iraqiyya's withdrawal from the GOI. "We will take your position into account," he told Ambassador. Making clear it was Iraqiyya's unquestionable, democratic right to withdraw from the government, Ambassador strongly urged Pachachi against such a move, saying that in our view it is a disastrous time for Iraqiyya to withdraw from the GOI. Given the domestic pressure for quick GOI political progress and the heavy price we are paying to create the conditions in which reconciliation can proceed, the Ambassador made clear the USG view that all political efforts should be directed toward helping the GOI gain momentum in meeting political benchmarks.

¶ 15. (C) Pachachi retorted that such a view presumed that PM Maliki is serious about reconciliation vice pursuing sectarian interests, adding that a real democracy necessitates real opposition -- why not try to form a new government that is competent, moderate and non-sectarian, he asked. Pointing to the differences in the "Iraqi and American clocks," Ambassador suggested that the time needed to form a new government would be unacceptable to Congress and the American public. As for Maliki's sincerity, Ambassador directed Pachachi to the PM's May 22 speech with

BAGHDAD 00001759 002 OF 002

its strong message of unity and reconciliation. Everything that can be done to support the PM in this efforts needs to be done, and it needs to be done now, Ambassador urged Pachachi.

Just Because You're Paranoid...

¶ 16. (S) Pachachi also raised Maliki's speech, accusing the PM of using the occasion to threaten Allawi. (Note: Mostly likely referring to Maliki's statement that "any Iraqi political entity that seeks support from abroad will be making a terrible mistake." End note.) Given the vagueness of the statement, Ambassador suggested it could just as likely refer to Iran as to Allawi's contacts with Arab governments; he noting that while Iranian interference was the most egregious, all of Iraq's neighbors are a problem. (Comment: The PM may well have intended to send a shot across Allawi's bow, and in fact complained to Ambassador May 17 that the Arab neighbors are conspiring against him by supporting other Iraqi political figures, noting Allawi (ref D). End comment.) As for Talabani's claim that while in London he convinced Allawi to return to Baghdad to participate in the GOI, Pachachi hinted that Allawi's presence in Baghdad should not be expected in the short term, saying that Allawi had not returned due to Iranian threats against his life passed by Gulf intelligence agencies.

Iraqiyya MP's in Baghdad Not All on Board with New Bloc

¶ 17. (C) Not all 25 Iraqiyya MPs are on board with the Allawi camp. Local press reported May 24 that Iraqiyya list minister have decided to continue in their posts even as Allawi calls for bloc members to pull out of the government. Hamid Majid Musa, a Communist MP in the Iraqiyya bloc told PolCouns May 19 that Iraqiyya had made no decision to

withdraw from the GOI and that in his view and many others such a move would serve only to isolate them from the government and their constituents. "We see Ayad as outside the Iraqiyya program," said Musa, referring to his efforts to ally with Sunnis parties against UIA, "which does not support Iraqiyya's cross-sectarian basis." Musa also criticized Allawi for encouraging Gulf countries to play a negative role.

18. (C) Comment: While Pachachi clearly got the message that the USG does not encourage Allawi to lead his bloc in a withdrawal from the GOI, judging from his reticence, it appears unlikely that either he or Allawi will abandon life abroad as critics of Iraq's leadership to join in the difficult reconciliation tasks at hand. At the end of his conversation with Ambassador, Pachachi requested that the Embassy help him arrange a visit to Washington to meet with senior officials including POTUS. He clearly has not internalized how his refusal to remain in Baghdad and participate in government has weakened his influence. End Comment.

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